

## FACT SHEET

# Methicillin-Resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA)

## For Child Care Centers

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### What is *Staphylococcus aureus*?

Germs called *Staphylococcus aureus* are bacteria. They are often just called “staph.” Many healthy people carry staph in their noses or on their skin. Sometimes staph bacteria can cause infections. Usually these infections are skin infections like pimples and boils. Sometimes they are more serious infections like lung or blood infections.

### What is Methicillin-Resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA)?

MRSA is a type of staph that has changed (become resistant) due to overuse and abuse of antibiotics. Antibiotics are drugs that kill bacteria. This resistant staph can't be killed by the usual antibiotics, like penicillin. Certain other antibiotics will still kill MRSA.

### What is Community-Associated MRSA (CA-MRSA)?

In the past, most infections caused by MRSA were in hospitals or nursing homes. Now, people who have not recently been in a hospital or nursing home are getting infections caused by MRSA. These are called community-associated MRSA infections. CA-MRSA infections are usually skin infections, like pimples or boils. These infections may need to be treated with carefully chosen antibiotics. It is also possible for CA-MRSA to cause blood, bone, and lung infections.

### Who is at risk for MRSA infections?

Anyone can get an infection with MRSA. However MRSA infections are most common in hospitals and nursing homes.

### How is MRSA spread?

The bacteria enter the body through open cuts and scrapes on the skin. The bacteria usually spread when a person with MRSA on their skin comes into contact with another person's skin. Hand washing and keeping wounds covered is important in stopping a possible spread of the infection. A less common way to spread MRSA is to share towels and sports equipment.

### What does a MRSA infection look like?

MRSA may cause a skin infection that looks like a pimple or boil. The sore often looks like a spider bite. It can be red, swollen, painful, and may drain pus. If you think a child in your care may have a skin infection, suggest to the parents that the child be seen by their healthcare provider.

### How can the spread of MRSA be prevented?

To prevent the spread of MRSA in child care facilities, follow the same good hygienic practices used to prevent all disease. These practices include:

- Handwashing is the simplest, most effective way to prevent infection.
  - Keep fingernails short and do not wear artificial nails.
  - Instruct children and staff to wash their hands for at least 15 seconds with warm, running water and soap. Singing the “ABCs” song while washing hands takes about 15 seconds.
- Alcohol-based gels may be used when hands are not visibly soiled or handwashing facilities are not available.
  - Always use disposable towels. Do not use a common hand towel.
  - Children and staff should wash their hands before eating, after using the restroom or being diapered, after playing on the playground, after sneezing or touching one's nose, after handling pets / animals, and before going home.

- Staff should wear gloves when dealing with urine, stool and blood and when administering first aid. Wash hands after removing gloves.
- Staff should use disposable cleaning cloths. If reusable cloths are used, they must be washed on a regular basis with chlorine bleach. Do not use sponges.
- Clean equipment and other environmental surfaces with which multiple individuals have bare skin contact with an over the counter detergent / disinfectant that specifies *Staphylococcus aureus* on the label and is suitable for the type of surface being cleaned, or diluted bleach solution.
- Clothing and towels that are heavily soiled with body fluids should be washed by themselves in detergent and bleach using the hottest cycle possible for that fabric.
- Cover diaper changing tables with paper and discard paper after each diaper change. Clean any visible soil from the diapering area with detergent after each use. Then wet the entire changing surface with a sanitizing solution. Wash hands after diapering, even if gloves were used.

For children or staff with any skin infection:

- Keep wounds covered with clean, dry bandages.
- Place all disposable wastes like dressings and bandages into plastic bags. Tie bags securely and discard with regular trash.
- Always clean hands immediately after touching infected skin or any item that has come into direct contact with a draining wound.
- Do not allow children to share items that may become contaminated with wound drainage, such as towels, clothing, bedding, and sports equipment that touches the skin.
- Children and staff with draining wounds that cannot be contained with dressings should be excluded from child care until the wound heals.